DOCUMENT RESUME

ED 314 791 CS 507 011

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TITLE The Experience and Expression of Emotion in the Workplace: An Exploratory Study of a Corrections Organization.
PUB DATE May 89
NOTE 36p.; Paper presented at the Annual Meeting of the International Communication Association (39th, San Francisco, CA, May 25-29, 1989).
PUB TYPE Speeches/Conference Papers (150) -- Reports - Research/Technical (143)

EDRS PRICE MF01/PC02 Plus Postage.
DESCRIPTORS Attitude Measures; *Behavior Patterns; Communication Research; *Conflict; *Correctional Institutions; *Emotional Response; *Interpersonal Communication; Interpersonal Relationship; Organizational Climate; *Organizational Communication; Questionnaires; Social Environment
IDENTIFIERS Communication Behavior; Correctional Officers; *Emotions

ABSTRACT

A study examined the role of emotion in organizational life (specifically, in a corrections organization) to determine the communicative circumstances and effects associated with emotional communication events. A detailed questionnaire administered to 105 employees of a state Department of Corrections and Rehabilitation provided data on the nature of emotions experienced, the socialization content of the events, the extent to which the emotions were expressed, and the relational and behavioral consequences of the events considered. Results revealed that positive and negative emotions had different communicative effects. In addition, the emotional events were associated with changed relational assessments. However, changes in communicative behavior were reported only when the other interactant was a co-worker (as opposed to a supervisor). Continued investigation into emotional communication and the definition and redefinition of workplace relationships appear to be called for. (Six tables of data are included; 38 references are attached.) (KEH)

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THE EXPERIENCE AND EXPRESSION OF EMOTION IN THE WORKPLACE: AN EXPLORATORY STUDY OF A CORRECTIONS ORGANIZATION

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THE EXPERIENCE AND EXPRESSION OF EMOTION IN THE WORKPLACE:
AN EXPLORATORY STUDY OF A CORRECTIONS ORGANIZATION

Abstract

Many depictions of organizational life emphasize rational-cognitive processes and ignore the role of emotion. In the current study, the characteristics and effects of emotional communication events described by 105 members of a corrections organization are explored. The nature of the emotions experienced, the socialization "content" of the events, the extent to which the emotions were expressed, and the relational and behavioral consequences of the events are considered. Results indicate that, positive and negative emotions had different communicative effects. In addition, the emotional events were associated with changed relational assessments. However, changes in communicative behavior were reported only when the other interactant was a co-worker (as opposed to a supervisor). The results are interpreted as a preliminary indication of the importance of emotional communication in the definition and redefinition of workplace relationships.

THE EXPERIENCE AND EXPRESSION OF EMOTION IN THE WORKPLACE: AN EXPLORATORY STUDY OF A CORRECTIONS ORGANIZATION

Although emotion is much studied in the social sciences, only recently has it begun to receive attention in the organizational literature (e.g., Sutton & Rafaeli, 1988). With few exceptions, descriptions of organizational communication in particular are often devoid of specific references to emotion, emphasizing instead the rational-cognitive terminology of information processing and decision making. Even those who acknowledge that organizational life can be less-than-rational (e.g., Staw, 1977; Weick, 1979) remain committed to cognitive or information processing perspectives. However, over-emphasis of the rational-cognitive aspects of organizational life may obscure the role of emotional experience and expression in contemporary organizations.

The emotional side of social activity is reflected in at least two areas of research relevant to organizational communication. First, conceptual treatments of newcomer socialization indicate that such affective reactions as surprise (Louis, 1980) and shock (Hughes, 1958) characterize newcomers' encounters with unfamiliar organizational expectations, procedures, and work groups. In the early stages of socialization these emotions may signal a mismatch between individual and organizational expectations and prompt sense-making, role learning and eventual behavioral adjustment in the new employee (Louis, 1980). Affect may play a similarly important part in work role transitions and other "resocialization" experiences (Brewin, 1980; Nicholson, 1984). Second, conceptual and empirical work on the nature of turning points in interpersonal relationships (Planalp & Honeycutt, 1984; Planalp, Rutherford, & Honeycutt, 1988) indicates that relationship-redefining events are typically emotional. Given recent calls for an improved understanding of how work relationships are redefined and/or changed (Jablin & Krone, 1987), it may be fruitful to investigate whether communicative events that are emotional contribute in some way to the reformulation of work relationships.

Even though related research in interpersonal communication and organizational assimilation associates affect with change in relationships and in individuals, fundamental questions about the nature of these relationships remain. For example, while emotion may be associated with relationship redefinition in strictly interpersonal contexts, this may not be true in the organizational context where emotion is subject to censure and relationships are often formally defined. Similarly, the existing socialization research pertaining to emotion is limited by its almost exclusive focus on affective reactions to the earliest stage of assimilation, organizational entry. Little is known about possible relationships between emotion and communication occurring in "middle" stage activities such as individualization, role negotiation, and relationship maintenance. It may be that emotional communication experiences occurring later in an employee's organizational tenure do not prompt sense-making but instead mark friction between individuals and their organization's rules and procedures. Consistent with this, social constructionists (e.g., Harre, 1986) suggest that emotion can be understood as a response to conflicts with the prevailing social order -- in this case, the organizational system of rules, norms, and role expectations.

Another limitation of the existing assimilation research is its emphasis on psychological emotional experience rather than on emotional expression and communication. Whether and how an employee expresses emotion may have relational consequences and might also reveal something about formal and informal organizational prescriptions regarding acceptable social behavior. In explaining the social constructionist position, Armon-Jones (1986) argues that emotions are functional in that they sustain social rules and conventions. Thus, by communicating anger, an employee might protest a co-worker's violation of existing rules and norms which may also function to persuade the co-worker to comply with such norms. The decision not to express emotion may be socially significant as well. For example, an employee might decide to suppress anger felt toward a supervisor in order to avoid violating organizational norms and the associated negative consequences.

The view of emotion advanced thus far is decidedly social. From a social constructionist perspective (Harre, 1986) emotion should be studied not simply to determine its individual level effects (e.g., physiological arousal) but also how it is manifested in social interaction (e.g., workplace interactions) and its role in sustaining or changing existing social arrangements (organizational norms; workplace relationships). Accordingly, the current investigation is designed to describe the nature of emotional communication encounters occurring within a work organization and to explore the effects of such encounters on work relationships.

To meet these objectives, the first research task was to describe the nature of the emotions experienced by organizational members. Second, because the literature indicates that emotional events might have a socialization or learning function, emotional communication events were further analyzed in terms of the potential learning that might have taken place (the socialization "content" of the event). Third, in the hopes of learning more about organizational norms governing emotional expression, the extent to which messages were suppressed during emotional encounters and the nature of these undelivered messages were investigated. Finally, the effects of these emotional encounters on interactants' assessments of their relationships and on subsequent interactions were documented.

Review of the Literature

The Nature of Emotions Experienced in Organizations

Because rationality appears to be the norm in most organizations, it may be that the experience of any emotion at work is likely to have a substantial impact. However, given the diversity of emotional experience, it is probable that some emotions have more impact than others. For example, the anger that a supervisor feels at a subordinate who repeatedly fails to follow instructions has more impact than the feeling of mild satisfaction resulting from a subordinate's following of routine instructions. In addition, some types of emotional encounters (e.g., getting angry at customers) may be "socialized out" of organizational life to better meet organizational

goals. Thus an initial step in the analysis of emotional encounters is to discriminate among the types of emotions experienced.

One basic dimension for discriminating among emotions is valence (Biggers and Masterson, 1984). Regarding valence, Averhill (1980) has noted that negative emotions receive more research attention than positive emotions, and that there are considerably more English words that describe negative emotions. Planalp et al. (1988), confirming an earlier study (Planalp & Honeycutt, 1985), found that relationship turning points were more likely to be emotionally negative than positive.

The negative-positive distinction has also received some attention in the organizational literature. Hochschild (1983) has noted that many jobs require employees to suppress negative emotion as part of their work. In an exploratory study, Waldron (in press) found that organization members systematically varied their attributions about the causes of emotional encounters depending on whether the emotion was positive or negative. Finally, Louis (1980) indicates that surprise can be positive (delight) or negative (dismay), and indicated that the effects of positive surprise have been understudied.

Beyond the positive/negative distinction, little has been done to specify the variety of emotions experienced in the organizational context. Yet two emotions with the same valence (e.g., anger, fear) may have quite different social implications. Moreover, research on the social aspects of emotion (e.g., Allwyn, 1985) indicates that emotional social encounters are often characterized by multiple emotions or emotion sequences (e.g., surprise, then fear, then anger) rather than a single emotion (e.g., surprise only).

In addition, while emotional encounters characterized by surprise may be prominent early in the assimilation process (Louis, 1980), different emotions (e.g., anger, frustration, satisfaction) may be experienced when organizational life appears more stable. As mentioned previously, little is known about the emotions occurring during the middle stages of socialization. Thus exploratory

research is needed to identify the diversity of positive and negative emotions experienced in organizations. Two research questions were formulated to address these issues:

RQ1: What specific emotions are associated with positive and negative emotional encounters?

RQ2: Are the emotions experienced early in socialization different from those experienced during the middle stages of socialization?

In addition to valence, another dimension of emotion is arousal or intensity (Shaver, Shwartz, Kirson, & O'Connor, 1987). Some emotional responses (e.g., terror) are more intense than others (e.g., pride). From theorists using such terms as "shock" (Hughes, 1958) and, later, "stress" (e.g., Feldman & Brett, 1983) to depict the newcomer's response to organizational reality, one can conclude that early socialization can be an emotionally intense experience. More recent work (e.g., Louis, 1980) describes less intense assimilation experiences in which emotion serves to prompt cognitive reassessment. However, the intensity issue has not been fully investigated. While it seems likely that high-intensity communication events would have more potent effects (e.g., in redefining organizational relationships or prompting reassessment of existing assumptions about the organization), it is not clear which types of communication events would prompt intense emotional reactions. One can speculate that because some organizations actively suppress negative expression and promote positive emotion (Hochschild, 1983), those negative communication events that do occur might be experienced as particularly intense. Due to the lack of guidance from the literature on this topic, an open-ended question was posed:

RQ3: What are the characteristics of high and low intensity emotional events?

Socialization Content

If as social constructionists suggest, emotional experiences function to preserve or change the social structure, it is reasonable to examine how emotional encounters facilitate or hamper socialization into the social structure of organizations. Through communication, organization

members gather knowledge about the various aspects of organizational life. This knowledge is the content of socializing communication. Socialization researchers have distinguished between content related to the work role and content related to culture (Louis, 1980; Van Maanen & Schein, 1979). With regard to the first of these, employees learn about the reality of their work, the extent to which it is more or less demanding (interesting, complex, etc.) than anticipated, and the behaviors that are expected or discouraged.

Employees also discover (and rediscover) how well their own expectations match the more general cultural expectations of the organization -- the formal and informal rules, requirements, and scripts (Jablin, 1982) that pattern organizational life and define what is "customary and desirable" (Van Maanen, 1977, p. 28). This general "organizational knowledge" represents a second kind of socialization content.

A type of socialization content that has received less attention in the literature, but that is explored in this study, involves knowledge about relationships with co-workers, subordinates, supervisors, and clients. Knowledge that facilitates the development and maintenance of such relationships can result in socialization and advancement (Graen & Ginsburg, 1977; Jablin, 1982; Katz, 1980).

To investigate whether emotional encounters experienced by respondents involved task, organizational, relational, or as yet unspecified socialization content, a fourth research question was posed:

RQ4: What types of socialization content are associated with emotional encounters?

Expression of Emotional Messages

Communication theorists have argued that communication rules regulate workplace communication and determine what is considered competent communication in an organization (Harris & Cronen, 1979). Because emotionality is apparently suppressed in organizations, it is likely that rules have evolved that discourage the expression of at least some kinds of emotion. A

temporary "blow up", a refusal to discuss a sensitive matter, storming out of the office, and light-hearted celebration are examples of emotional expressions that might be censured or accepted depending on the organizational prescriptions governing emotional behavior.

At issue in this study is the degree to which the characteristics of the emotional event (e.g., valence of the emotion, the nature of the relationship with the other communicator) predict whether and how the emotion is expressed. Two characteristics that seem particularly important in this regard are the valence of the event and the role of the other communicator. As suggested previously, there is reason to believe that negative and positive emotions have different social implications. Organization members are sometimes trained to suppress negative emotions as part of their work (Hochschild, 1983). Such emotions may be particularly likely to be surpressed if the social consequences of expression are high. Thus, the decision to express emotion may depend on the organizational role occupied by the other individual. Expressiveness might be different with peers than with a supervisor or client, for instance. Research Question 5 pertains to this issue.

RQ5: Which characteristics of emotional encounters (if any) determine whether or not participants in an emotional event choose to express or repress emotional messages?

Relational Consequences of Emotional Events

The final issue investigated in this study is the extent to which emotional communication events are associated with subsequent changes in work relationships. Changes can take at least two general forms. First, communicators may acquire knowledge that causes them to engage in a cognitive reassessment of their relationships with supervisors or workplace peers. Second, this cognitive process may be supplemented by long-term changes in overt communication behavior.

Louis's (1980) model stresses that surprise experiences can result in cognitive reinterpretation on the part of the employee. Presumably, it is through such reinterpretation that newcomers learn socialization "lessons", including those relevant to workplace relationships. In treating relationship reassessment as one possible outcome of emotional communication encounters, two issues are

important. First, it must be determined if such encounters result in relationship reassessment. Second, and more important, if reassessment does occur, the nature of the reassessment must be documented. Previous research provides some insight into the dimensions along which work relationships may change. Most of this work has focused on superior-subordinate relationships. The program of research by Graen and his colleagues (e.g., Graen & Ginsburg, 1977; Graen & Cashman, 1975) has, in its attempts to distinguish between "leadership" and "supervisory" exchanges, identified some of the dimensions of work relationships. Among these are trust, confidence, and perceived competence.

Communication theorists extrapolating on this work have identified "openness" (Jablin & Krone, 1987) as a theme in leadership exchanges. To date, little research has explored the events that might result in changes along these or other dimensions of work relationships. Research pertaining to co-worker relationships is even less extensive. In summarizing this research, Jablin (1987) indicates that past research has emphasized the degree of conformity or information dependence characterizing early stages of co-worker relationships, but he notes that little research has investigated the communicative circumstances associated with change in protracted work relationships. A multi-part research question addresses relationship change.

> RQ6: How (if at all) does the variance in the characteristics (valence, intensity, content, etc.) of emotional encounters relate to relationship reassessment with status equals and unequals in organizations? Along which dimensions (e.g., trust, respect, perceived competence), if any, do such changes take place?

Cognitive reassessments of work relationships may ultimately result in behavioral adjustments. An angry exchange with a co-worker may prompt an employee to reassess his/her relationship with the co-worker, which may in turn result in less frequent or more superficial exchanges. On the other hand, especially in the organizational context, a changed cognitive assessment of a relational partner may not result in outward changes in communication behavior.

For example, a subordinate who dislikes a supervisor may not change his/her communication because of norms about "professionalism" or fear of retribution.

A final open-ended research question regarding changes in overt communication behavior (talk) stemming from emotional encounters was posed.

RQ7: How (if at all) does communication behavior change subsequent to emotional communication encounters?

Method

Subjects

Subjects in this study were 117 employees of a state Department of Corrections and Rehabilitation. Of these, 12 participated in a pilot study that was used to refine the questionnaire. Thus 105 parole officers, senior parole officers, supervisors, and support staff participated in the final phase of the study. All subjects participated in the study prior to participating in an annual in-service training.

A majority of the sample (66%) was male; 53% were parole officers, 20% were senior parole officers (with limited supervisory responsibilities), 20% were unit supervisors, and the remainder (7%) were support staff. Average tenure in the organization was 121 months. Average tenure in the current job was 89 months.

Data Collection

Sudman and Bradburn (1974) suggest that subjects are more likely to reveal sensitive information on questionnaires than they are in interviews. In addition, Epstein (1979), suggests that self-reports about emotional experiences are more ecologically valid than data collected in the laboratory. Therefore, a detailed questionnaire was considered the appropriate data collection instrument for this study. The questionnaire asked subjects to recall a communication event that

had an "emotional impact" on them. The event was to have involved the respondent and at least one other person in the organization. If several events came to mind, respondents were encouraged to choose the event they could remember most clearly. Respondents were guaranteed complete anonymity and assured that the details of their reports would not be shared with management or other representatives of the organization.

Open-ended questions asked respondents to describe the emotional encounter in terms of its antecedents, the event itself, the emotional response they felt, what was said by the parties involved, what (if anything) the respondent wanted to say but chose not to, the changes (if any) the event caused in their relationship with the other person (s), and changes (if any) in the way they subsequently talked with the other person (s) involved in the event. Additional questions asked for data pertaining to years and months of tenure (currently and when the event occurred), status of the other person, socializing messages the respondent had received about dealing with emotion at work, the intensity and typicality of the event described, and demographic data.

To ensure that a comparison between positive and negative events could be made, subjects were asked to describe either a negative or a positive encounter. With the exception of the negative or positive specification, all questionnaires were identical. The pilot study indicated that recalling an emotional encounter was, in general, not difficult for subjects, but that some respondents could more clearly recall a negative then a positive encounter (or vice-versa). Accordingly, if subjects who initially received a "positive" questionnaire were unable to recall clearly a positive emotional encounter, but were able to recall a negative encounter, they were allowed to describe the negative encounter. The same procedure was used for subjects who initially received a "negative" questionnaire but could more clearly remember a positive emotional encounter. This procedure preserved the subject pool but also resulted in more negative (62) than positive (43) events being reported.

Coding Procedure

Responses to open-ended questions were analyzed using the following procedure. The researchers first reviewed a subset of the responses (less than 40% of the total sample) for recurrent themes and characteristics. An initial coding system was developed to account for most of the responses. The researchers then coded the sub-sample independently. Subsequently, the researchers reviewed their independent codes, identified agreements and disagreements, and clarified remaining definitional ambiguities in the coding system. The revised coding system was then used to recode the sub-sample and to obtain an independent measure of inter-rater reliability for the remaining (uncoded) responses. Reliabilities were assessed using Scott's pi procedure (Holsti, 1969). Reliabilities ranged from 86% to 95%.

A different procedure was used for research questions pertaining to the nature of emotional states. The great diversity of emotion names and the various meanings attributed to emotional states necessitated the use of a classification system (developed through cluster analysis) for the purpose of categorizing emotion-describing words according to their common properties (Shaver et al., 1987). The system allows emotion descriptions to be associated with one of six "basic" emotion clusters (fear, anger, sadness, surprise, joy, love).

Simple matching of the words used by respondents to those included in the Shaver et al. (1987) taxonomy accounted for nearly all such words. Only the few words that were not directly referenced in the taxonomy required judgment on the part of the researchers. The researchers jointly determined which category was appropriate in these cases. Because respondents described multiple emotions fairly often (mean = 1.4, range = 1-3), coding of the emotions was dichotomous. That is, it was determined whether each of the six emotion clusters was or was not represented in each respondent's description.

Analysis

Statistical analyses took one of two forms. Much of the data derived from analysis of the open-ended questions were categorical in nature. This nominal data was analyzed by using chi-square (with Yate's correction) and log-linear methods to assess the departure of the observed

frequencies from those expected by chance. Data measured at the interval level (e.g., intensity of the event was measured on a 5-point Likert scale) were analyzed using analysis of variance.

Results

The results discussed are of three general types. First, preliminary computations were performed to derive basic descriptive data about the participants and about the emotional events. Second, several analyses involved the development of content categories that accounted for subjects' responses to open-ended questions. Tables 1, 2, 4 and 6 define these categories and associated descriptive statistics. A third set of analyses was designed to assess the degree of association between two aspects of the emotional encounters (valence of the event and role of the other interactant) and three outcome variables: whether or not emotional messages were withheld during the communication event, whether or not changed relational perceptions were attributed to the emotional event, and whether or not changes in communication behavior were attributed to the event. Tables 3, 5 and 7 present the log-linear models generated for these analyses.

Preliminary Analyses

To facilitate description of the emotional encounters and investigation of the research questions, several preliminary descriptive statistics were calculated. One questionnaire item asked respondents to describe their relationships with the other person(s) involved in the emotional encounter. Analysis of the responses indicated the other person was a supervisor (30.5%), subordinate (9.5%), co-worker (someone in the same work group; 18.1%), or client (14.3%). In addition, there were a substantial number of encounters (27.3) with persons from units within the same organization but external to the immediate work group and with persons who appeared to be boundary spanners (e.g., lawyers, judges). To avoid low frequencies in the statistical analyses, categories were collapsed to reflect authority relationships. Supervisors remained a separate category (30.5% of sample). Subordinates and co-workers were combined into a category called

work group members or "co-workers" (27.6% of sample). The remaining categories were combined into the single category of workgroup nonmembers or "externals" (41.9% of sample).

Several questionnaire items were designed to measure the typicality of emotional encounters in the work setting. On five-point Likert-type scales (1 = very untypical, 5 = very typical), respondents rated the typicality of emotional experiences in general ($M = 2.90$, $SD = 1.20$) and of the encounter they were describing ($M = 2.47$, $SD = 1.18$). Analysis of variance revealed that respondents thought negative emotional events were (in general) more typical than positive events ($F(1, 100) = 15.18$, $p < .001$) in their organization. Regarding the typicality of the specific event being described, the negative emotional encounters ($M = 2.48$) were rated as more typical than the positive ($M = 2.07$) emotional encounters ($F(1, 99) = 8.96$, $p < .003$).

Nature of the Emotion

The first three research questions deal with the nature of the emotions experienced during the encounters. Research Question 1 asked what specific emotions were associated with positive and negative encounters. Categorization according to the Shaver et al. (1987) taxonomy indicated that a variety of negative and positive emotions were reported (see Table 1). Emotion-describing words related to the "anger" cluster were used by the largest proportion of the sample (47% of total sample, 80% of those describing negative events). In general, these words (e.g., disgust, hate, bitterness, vengeance) describe an energized, active, emotional response to circumstances the respondent viewed as unjust, threatening, or illegitimate.

Emotion words related to the fear and sadness clusters were about equally likely to be mentioned (22% and 23% respectively). Words describing fear (e.g., panic, anxiety, apprehension) appear to share the common characteristics of vulnerability and the desire to escape from, or control, current or anticipated threats. Words classified within the sadness cluster (e.g., hurt, disappointment, depression) described apparently passive responses to hopeless and sometimes unexpected negative events. While fear-describing words were often anticipatory in

nature, sadness-describing words appeared to be responses to already experienced negative outcomes.

Positive emotions were categorized into the categories of joy, affection (adapted from Shaver et al.'s [1987] "love" category), and positive surprise. Joy can be characterized as the opposite of sadness. Accordingly, words used to describe joy (e.g., pride, enthusiasm, happiness, relief) tended to be associated with the attainment of desired outcomes and a feeling of personal well-being. Joy was present in a large proportion of the event descriptions (33% of total sample; 81% of positive descriptions). Affection responses (liking, caring) were different from joy responses in that the former were other-directed while the latter were mostly self-directed. Words describing affection were used in only 3 (2.8%) of the accounts.

Surprise is associated with the discovery of something unexpected. Only a single account used one of the words (amazement, surprise, astonishment) associated by Shaver et al. (1987) with positive surprise. Words referring to negative surprise did not emerge as a distinct cluster in the work performed by these authors. However, because negative surprise has received attention in the socialization literature (Louis, 1980), an attempt was made to identify words (e.g., shock, disbelief, betrayal) in the Shaver et al. (1987) taxonomy that appeared related to the negative discovery of something unexpected. Seven of the negative descriptions (6% of the total sample; 11% of negative descriptions) contained such words.

Research Question 2 asked whether emotions experienced during communication events occurring early in the socialization process were different from those experienced later. To investigate this question, the emotional encounters experienced in the first 12 months (16 of the 105 total) were analyzed separately. Results indicated that for these early emotional encounters, the percentages associated with each category of emotional response corresponded closely with those reported previously for the whole sample. Because such a small number of events occurring during the first twelve months, a second analysis compared events that had occurred within the first 24 months (32 of the 105 total) with those occurring later than 25 months. Again, there was

no difference between this group and the remainder of the sample. Thus no further analysis was warranted with regard to research question 2.

Research Question 3 was concerned with the intensity associated with the communicative events described by respondents. Analysis of variance indicated that on a 5-point scale measuring intensity, negative events (M = 4.31) were experienced as more intense than positive events (M = 3.79) (F (1, 103) = 8.42, $p < .005$). Because any one respondent's description could have included multiple emotions, no attempt was made to distinguish between the intensity levels associated with the more specific positive and negative emotion categories. The emotional intensity of the event was not influenced by whether it was experienced early (less than 24 months) or late in an employee's tenure (F (1,87) = .631, NS).

Socialization Content

Analysis of the two open-ended questions asking respondents to describe the antecedents and nature of the emotional encounter, yielded five categories pertaining to socialization content. One category was designated "task" knowledge. Encounters classified in this category were opportunities to learn about the reality of work, how to do the work, what types of work behavior were rewarded or punished by the organization, and the degree to which the work could be intrinsically rewarding or unrewarding. A second category, "general organizational" knowledge, referred to knowledge about the organization's culture, climate, politics, and associated formal and informal procedures.

Three additional categories concerned "relational" knowledge. Encounters classified in these categories appeared to promote redefinition (or reinforcement of existing definitions) of the employees' relationships with others in the organization. That is, respondents adjusted or confirmed their perceptions of others (e.g., "I no longer respect him"), learned about terms of the relationship (e.g., "we are co-workers but only talk when we have to), or learned what others thought of them (e.g., "I found out my supervisor was jealous of me"). The knowledge derived from these encounters pertained to a) authority relationships (knowledge about relationships with

superiors/subordinates); b) lateral relationships (knowledge about relationships with individuals in the same work group, boundary links, and support staff); or c) personal relationships (relationships involving friendship or romantic involvements).

Of the 105 encounters categorized, 35 (33%) involved task knowledge, 31 (29%) involved organization knowledge, and 39 (37%) involved relationship knowledge. Of the 39 encounters involving relationship knowledge, 23 pertained to authority relationships, 13 pertained to lateral relationships, and 3 pertained to personal relationships. Table 2 gives examples of responses classified in these categories.

Expression of Emotional Messages

Research Question 5 was designed to determine under which conditions participants in emotional encounters choose to express (or suppress) emotional messages. To answer this question, respondents were first explicitly asked whether they withheld information during the encounter. The distribution of answers on this question was similar to that expected by chance (chi-square (1, N = 103) = .490, NS). To determine whether the valence of the event and/or the role of the other interactant (supervisor, co-worker, workgroup nonmember) influenced information withholding, an asymmetrical log linear analysis was conducted with information withholding (yes/no) serving as the outcome variable. Using guidelines documented by Kennedy (1983), it was determined that the best fitting, most parsimonious model included only main effects for valence (models and associated statistics are presented in Table 3). Examination of models which include the main effect for partner role and interaction effects reveals that no substantive improvement in fit is possible after the effects for valence are accounted for. Examination of the Lambdas associated with the chosen model reveal that information withholding was more likely during negative (Z = 4.1) than positive (Z = -4.1) emotional encounters.

Also relevant to research question 5, respondents who indicated that they withheld messages were asked to describe the messages. Analyses of these responses yielded five broad categories of withheld messages (see Table 4 for examples). Insults/compliments, defined as messages that

would have belittled or praised the other participant, accounted for the largest percentage (39.1%) of the 46 responses to this question. Protests/defenses, defined as challenges to or defenses of the organizational or relational status quo, were described by 32.6% of respondents. Justifications/admissions either bolstered (defended, justified) one's self or behavior or denigrated one's self or behavior and accounted for 15.2% of the messages. Venting/suppressing, messages pertained to the venting of emotion (e.g., "letting off steam") or to regrets about venting. These accounted for 6.5% of the withheld messages.

These categories were conceptualized as dimensions with roughly opposite (positive/negative) poles. In reality, most of the withheld messages pertained to negative emotional events, the negative pole of each dimension (protests, insults, justifications, venting) accounted for the large majority of the messages. Only three messages (two compliments and one expression of regret over an angry outburst) were accounted for by the positive dimensions of these categories).

Relational Consequences of Emotional Events

To investigate research question 6 which concerns the relationship between the characteristics of emotional encounters and subsequent relationship change, respondents were asked if and how their relationships with the partner changed. Analysis of answers (yes/no) to the first question revealed that 65.7% of respondents indicated that relationship change resulted, while 34.3% said that it did not. This disparity is significantly larger than what would be expected on the basis of chance (chi-square (1, N = 102) = 10.03, $p < .002$). To determine whether the valence of the event and/or the role of the other interactant (supervisor, co-worker, workgroup nonmember) were associated with relationship change, an asymmetrical log linear analysis was conducted with relationship change serving as the outcome variable. Again using guidelines documented by Kennedy (1983), it was determined that the saturated model best fit the data (models and associated statistics are presented in table 5). A cell-by-cell examination of the lambdas revealed both a main effect for partner role and an interaction. The interaction has implications for those emotional events in which the other interactant was supervisor. In such cases, relationship change was likely

($\underline{Z}$ = 2.00) after negative events, but not after positive events ($\underline{Z}$ = -2.00). Valence of the event was statistically unimportant when the relational partner was a nonsupervisor.

Further examination of the main effect for partner role indicated that, when the other interactant was a workgroup nonmember, respondents were more likely to indicate that relationships remained unchanged subsequent to the emotional event ($\underline{Z}$ = 2.34). Alternatively, relationship change was apparently more likely after an emotional event involving a nonsupervisory co-worker, although the z-scores associated with the change ($\underline{Z}$ = 1.74) and no change ($\underline{Z}$ = -1.74) are not large enough to be considered significant.

The nature of the reported relationship changes was investigated by coding respondents' open-ended descriptions of the changes. Responses were analyzed to determine the primary dimension along which each relationship either improved or worsened (see Table 6 for definitions of these dimensions). The percentage of encounters placed in each category was: liking/closeness, 27.8%; trust, 24.5%; respect, 19.6%; openness, 16.3%; and structural, 11.4%. Three of the responses were double-coded because they involved change along two dimensions. One response was uncodable with this category system.

Research Question 7 asked whether changes in communication behavior would be attributed to the emotional incidents. Responses to a questionnaire item asking respondents whether they had experienced "changes in the way you talk to the other person" indicated that a "yes" response ($\underline{N}$ = 53) was more likely than a "no" response (46), but not significantly so (chi-square (1, $\underline{N}$ = 99) = 1.70, $\underline{p}$ < .19). An asymmetrical log-linear analysis using valence of the emotional event and partner role as the classification variables and yes/no responses to this questionnaire item as the outcome variable was conducted (see Table 7 for models and associated statistics). The model which included only the main effects for partner role proved to be the most parsimonious explanation of the data. Thus, the following results pertain to both positive and negative emotional events. Examination of the log-linear parameter estimates revealed that changes in talk were likely subsequent to emotional encounters with co-workers ($\underline{Z}$ = 2.54), but highly unlikely after

emotional encounters with those external to the work group ($Z = -1.96$). No significant effect on talk was found when the partner was a supervisor ($Z = -.98$). Follow-up chi-square testing revealed that changes were more frequent when the partner was a peer or subordinate than when the other was a supervisor (chi-square (1, $N = 57$) = 3.40, $p < .06$), or located outside the immediate work group (chi-square (1, $N = 70$) = 6.38, $p < .01$).

In addition to indicating whether or not their communication behavior had changed, respondents were asked to describe (if possible) the nature of these changes. Forty four written descriptions were obtained. Qualitative analysis of these responses revealed that they fell into one of six categories. Two categories pertained to the quantity of communication. The most frequently described change in talk involved attempts to reduce or completely avoid communicative contact with the other individual. These "decreased quantity" responses accounted for 31% of the total. A smaller number of those responding to this question reported increased communicative contact after the emotional encounter. These "increased quantity" responses accounted for 13% of the total.

Several categories pertained to changes in the quality of communication with the partner. Some of the respondents indicated that they were now likely to edit their conversation to be more careful, superficial, professional or less personal in their talk. These descriptions were labelled "more guarded" and accounted for 22% of the 44 responses. Conversely, some respondents (13%) appeared to be "less guarded" after the incident. In addition, three of the responses indicated that subsequent communication became more legalistic, in the sense that each exchange was carefully documented in writing or by witnesses. Finally, only one individual suggested that subsequent interactions were more confrontive. Three descriptions were too vague (e.g., "more positive than before") to be meaningfully classified with this classification system.

Discussion

The results of this study provide some initial information about the role of emotion in organizational life and about the communicative circumstances and effects associated with

emotional organization events. First, it appears that negative events are characterized by other-directed, aggressive emotions (anger), while positive events are associated mostly with a self-satisfied, inner-directed emotional experience (joy). A possible implication of this finding is that impactful negative emotional experiences are more likely to produce changes in the social aspects of work life. Impactful positive experiences, on the other hand, may be more associated with nonsocial aspects of organizational life (e.g., personal achievements).

The near-absence of surprise in respondents' accounts is significant given Louis' (1980) description of its role in the socialization process. The prevalence of emotional responses related to anger, fear, and despair may be attributed to the fact that the events described by respondents in this sample more often occurred following one to two years of employment. Whereas surprise may prompt reassessment and adjustment in the new employee, it is possible that other emotions prompt reassessment during the middle socialization stages. It may be that these other emotions serve additional functions. For instance, anger, an apparently common emotion in this organization, seems to be an emotionally "aggressive" response to organizational or relational circumstances. While anger may prompt reassessment, through its expression employees resist rather than simply adjust to organizational or relational practices they perceive as unjust or inadequate. Thus, anger may serve to activate "voice" in organizations (Hirschman, 1970). Anger may prompt employees to protest and thus contribute to the redefinition of the organizational status quo.

Interestingly, protests were prominent (along with insults) among the emotional messages employees reported withholding. The data pertaining to the withholding of emotional messages (the concern of Research Question 5) are suggestive in that, especially in the context of negative events, they provide tentative support for a link between withholding (not protesting, not insulting) and relationship change. That is, respondents who suppressed negative information also reported that their relationships with other co-workers changed (along dimensions of trust, respect, openness, etc). Relationship redefinition may be an alternative to expressing sensitive information.

Future research might investigate whether employees who choose not to voice emotional messages pay a price, either emotionally or in the quality of their relationships with co-workers and supervisors.

An additional point about the nature of the emotions pertains to the importance of valence. For the sample studied here, negative events were more intense and more typical than positive events. The higher levels of emotional intensity accompanying negative events might make it difficult to maintain a "professional" demeanor. This possibility is supported by the finding that participants in negative encounters were more likely to withhold emotional messages. The finding also suggests that organizational prescriptions exist that prevent the expression of intensely negative affect. Consistent with the well-established idea that bad news does not travel up the hierarchy (e.g., Roberts & O'Reilly, 1974), suppression of negative affect was most likely with supervisors. While others have indicated that negative emotion is not tolerated in some organizations (Hochschild, 1983), the results of the current study suggest that communicative events involving negative emotions may have potentially long-term relational and communicative consequences.

The lower intensity levels, stronger likelihood of expression, and more limited relational impact (particularly with supervisors) associated with positive encounters indicates that positive emotion is more acceptable in this work setting. It may be that communicative events experienced as positive involve confirmations rather than violations of existing expectations about self, work role, and work relationships. Confirmations may be less intensely emotional than violations. The finding that positive and negative affect had clearly different effects may indicate that previous concerns about the dearth of research pertaining to positive affect (e.g., Averhill, 1980; Louis, 1980) are warranted. In particular, additional research is needed on the means by which the experience and expression of positive and negative emotions are "socialized out" of or "socialized in" to organization members.

The socialization content associated with emotional encounters was also a concern of this study. While other authors have commented on the work role and cultural knowledge conveyed

during socialization (e.g., Louis, 1980; Van Maanen, 1977), more than a third of the encounters described by respondents in this study appeared to involve primarily relational issues. Moreover, the results indicated that even those encounters yielding task-related knowledge (e.g., a performance evaluation) or organizational knowledge (e.g., discovering from a supervisor that women are discriminated against by management), resulted in a changed relationship with the other person involved in the encounter. Thus, the experience of emotion may be a prerequisite, or at least a correlate, to change in work relationships.

However, the results pertaining to socialization content also indicate that the work itself can be intrinsically emotion-producing. The work performed by the individuals in the sample studied in this investigation (mostly parole officers) can involve emotionally-charged communication with convicted criminals, their victims, and other representatives of the criminal justice system. Such encounters may themselves be socializing -- yielding knowledge about reality of the work and the degree to which the individual has realistic or unrealistic expectations about the desirability of the work or the nature of the criminal justice system.

In light of recent calls for more dynamic treatments of workplace relationships, a potentially useful contribution of this study is its identification of communication events that appear to be relationship-changing. Both positive and negative events were associated with changed relational perceptions, although negative events were more so. The data also permit some discussion of the dimensions of such changes. Coding of the respondents' comments on this issue indicated that liking/closeness, trust, and respect were the most commonly cited dimensions of change. While the respect dimension seemed to involve reassessment of the other communicator's professional competence (e.g., "I have no respect for his abilities as a supervisor"), the liking and trust dimensions appear to involve highly personal reassessments of the other person's character (e.g., "I hate his guts", "We are no longer friends", "I could never confide in him"). The relative prominence of these emotionally-charged, highly personal evaluations requires attention in depictions of organizational communication.

The results of our study suggest that changes in liking, trust, and respect may be more likely following negative emotional encounters with supervisors than with peers. Superior-subordinate relationships characterized by liking and trust might be "leadership" rather than "supervisory" exchanges (e.g., Graen & Cashman, 1975; Graen & Ginsburg, 1977). Thus, it is possible that the emotional encounters described by respondents could play a part in shifting workplace authority relationships from one level of exchange to another. Less is known about co-worker (peer) relationship development and change in organizations. The results of our study suggest that relationships with members of one's immediate work group may be more likely to change as a result of emotional encounters than are relationships maintained outside the work group. A further issue requiring research attention includes the extent to which change in authority relationships parallels change in other types of organizational relationships. Finally, it might be interesting to examine how, if at all, changes in immediate authority relationships affect those with peers and status unequals both within and outside the work group/organization.

A potentially interesting finding was that while the emotional events seemed to be consistently associated with relationship change, the association with changes in self-reported overt communication behavior were not so easily interpreted. When the other interactant was a supervisor or an outsider (not a member of the immediate work group), communication behavior change was less likely than when the other interactant was a nonsupervisory co-worker. This may be because there is simply less latitude for change in one's communication with a supervisor. Norms prescribing communication with a supervisor may be more explicit and/or formalized. In addition, the consequences of changing one's supervisor-directed behavior in a negative way (avoidance, providing only superficial information) may be more severe than the consequences for negative behavior exhibited toward nonsupervisory co-workers. Alternatively, emotionally charged contacts with those outside the work group may not result in subsequent adjustments in communication behavior. Continued investigation of the circumstances associated with (such)

change may be of particular importance to those interested in role management phases of organizational socialization.

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Table 1: Types of Emotions Experienced During Communication Event

Emotion	Related Terms	% of Encounters w/ Same Valence *	% of Total Encounters
Negative Emotions (N = 62)			
Anger	Frustration , Hate	80.6	47.6
Sadness	Despair, Hurt	38.7	22.8
Fear	Anxiety, Panic	37.0	21.9
Surprise	Shock, Disbelief	11.2	6.6
Positive Emotions (N = 43)			
Joy	Happiness, Pride	83.3	33.3
Surprise	Amazement, Astonishment	2.8	.095
Affection	Liking, Caring	6.9	2.8

* Numbers in this column refer to percentage of respondents reporting that they experienced emotion. More than one emotion could have been experienced so numbers do not sum to 100%.

Table 2: Socialization Content of Emotional Encounters

Category	% of Total (N = 105)	Content Themes
1. Task-Related Knowledge	33.3	Criticisms of work habits; paroleeexpresses thanks; co-workers offers help with difficult task; interview distraught victim
2. General Organizational Knowledge	29.5	Succeed in convincingorganization to re-evaluate job; learn management is sexist or racist; learn administrative procedures
3. Relational Knowledge	37.1	Discover betrayal; Supervisor abuses authority; subordinate refuses to comply; develop romantic relationship; discover co-worker is taking advantage of you.
a. Authority Relationships	21.9	
b. Lateral Relationships	12.3	
c. Personal Relationships	2.8	

Table 3: Log-linear Models: Valence x Partner Role x Information Withholding

Model	Residual			Component		
	DF	L^2	P	DF	X^2	P
Null	5	19.6	.001	1	19.08	.001
Due to valence*	4	.52	.97	2	.01	.99
Due to partner role	2	.51	.97	2	.51	.97

* This model selected for subsequent analysis

Table 4: Messages Withheld During the Encounter

Message Category	% of total	Examples
Insults	39.1	"You only got promoted because of the seniority rule." "I wanted to tell her that she's been a pain in the butt." "You are sub-human!"
Protests	32.6	"I wanted to refuse to go [on an errand for supervisor]." "Should have...filed a grievance." "Wanted to confront her about racial allegations she had made."
Justifications	15.6	"Wanted to point out how poorly some of the other officers were doing." "...that I and the agency have treated her well and don't owe her anything." "I wanted to tell them everything isn't as simple as it seems."
Venting	6.5	"I wanted to swear." "Wanted to relate my feeling toward the offense."

* Three responses were uncodable using this category scheme.

Table 5: Log-linear Models: Valence x Partner Role x Relationship Change

Model	Residual			Component		
	DF	L^2	P	DF	X^2	P
Null	5	12.17	.03			
Due to valence	4	10.53	.03	1	1.82	.20
Due to partner role	2	5.23	.07	2	5.12	.07
Saturated*	0	0	0	2	5.23	.07

* This model selected for further analysis

Table 6: Dimensions of Relationship Change

Change Dimension	% of total (N = 62) *	Examples
Liking/Closeness	27.8	"We hate each other." "We no longer socialize together (just co-workers)."
Trust	24.5	"No longer trust that he will back me." "I am on guard now."
Respect	19.6	"Total disrespect for him which was not externalized." "[Now] I admire him for his work knowledge..."
Openness	16.3	"He became more receptive to advice." "Now, I tell that person what I feel about him."
Structural	11.4	"She received disciplinary action and was removed from my typing duties." "[My] work assignment was changed."

* One response was uncodable with this category scheme